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Dime Novel Reviews THE COMING OF DR. QUARTZ

By J. Randolph Cox



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Dime Novel Reviews

(Being a Series of Retrospective Reviews of Significant Works of News-stand Literature)

By J. Randolph Cox

THE COMING OF DR. QUARTZ

1: "The Coming of Dr. Quartz" (Nick Carter Library, No. 13: "3,000 Miles By Freight; or, The Mystery of a Piano Box." Oct. 31, 1891.)

Doctor Jack Quartz may have been the most memorable of the many foes of Nick Carter. He was neither the first of Nick's enemies nor the first to return for a second encounter with the great New York detective. Burton Quintard has the honor of being Nick's first recurring adversary. In fact, Nick was fresh from his triumph over Quintard in Paris when he was plunged into the mystery of the piano box.

Chapter One: "The Mysterious Box." The Scene is the Southern Pacific Company freight house in San Francisco. The center of attention is a mammoth piano box, built for an upright piano and consigned to Basil Barrington. The box—lined with oak and lead inside the plain pine exterior—is fitted out like a small apartment. The box has apparently been occupied recently by a man and a woman. It has been a year since it arrived at the freight house and it has never been claimed. Auctioned off to pay for the freight bill and storage it is bought by Jeremy Stone for his dime museum. The police have been unable to trace the owner of the box and cannot supply information on its history, so Stone writes to Nick Carter in New York.

Nick arrives, checks in at the Palace Hotel, questions Stone, and examines the box. He finds a cane which was overlooked by the other searchers. It has been hidden behind the padding on the walls of the interior of the box. From this he deduces the man in the box was 5 feet 6 inches tall. A smoking jacket and four collars, size 16½, lead him to decide the man was muscular. Other clues include some mustache hairs (black and coated with wax) and several cigars which have never been smoked.

"Another thing," Nick says, "I judge that the man is past forty years of age, for a younger man would never have employed such careful method in his preparations and departure."

Chapter Two: "Getting Down to Facts." Nick continues his deductions about the occupants of the piano box, then goes to meet Phineas Doane, the man in charge of all incoming freight, "who possessed a prodigious memory for all details connected with his department." Nick finds him sitting on a dry-goods box "surrounded by a flood of tobacco juice, which he was engaged in steadily augmenting." He proceeds to question him further about the piano box, the railroad car it came in, and some of the other unclaimed freight from the same car—particularly a box of crockery, one filled with merchandise, one without a label, and one half-barrel of wine.

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Nick searches the box car itself and finds some initials scratched inside: "M. B." followed by the name, "Jack."

Chapter Three: "The Golden Hair-pin." Nick finds a hidden door in the side of the freight car—a door just large enough to allow someone to pass through sideways.

He then calls on Samuel Kearney, the auctioneer who sold the piano box. Kearney tells Nick the other unclaimed freight was bought by a man named Joel Dent. Dent paid cash, but never picked up his merchandise. Dent is described as looking like "a prize-fighter turned gentleman . . . rather short than tall, and very dark—swarthy, like a Spaniard . . . shaved clean."

Nick sums up his findings: he suggests the other freight boxes and the barrel contain dirty dishes, empty food cans, and wine, which were used to sustain "Jack" and "M. B." enroute in their piano box compartment.

When Nick goes to police headquarters to see what more he can learn, he has his attention shifted to another case by the chief. Before turning to this new case, he wires Chick, his assistant, to begin the investigation of the piano box at the point in New York where the freight car left for San Francisco.

The new case is the murder of a young woman with golden hair—strangled by someone with powerful hands. The body was left at headquarters by someone driving a stolen hack . . . someone who fits the description already given of "Joel Dent." Nick questions Mrs. Craddock, the police matron, about the appearance of the dead girl and learns she wore golden hair-pins. These hair-pins are identical to several found in the piano box. (This was one of the ways Nick could tell the box had been occupied by a woman as well as a man.)

Chapter Four: "His Ninth Murder." Nick reveals his findings to the chief of police and that he thinks "Joel Dent" is the mysterious "Jack" who traveled "3,000 miles by freight" in the piano box. He suggests possible motives for the strange business of buying the boxes at the auction: (a) to gain time before the boxes could be opened, thus they would not be connected with the piano-box in anyone's mind; (b) to keep the contents secret until later when "Jack" could call for them; (c) "Jack's" companion may have wanted something from one of the boxes and asked him to get it for her by this method.

The Chief gives Nick a note to show to Kearney, the auctioneer, which authorizes him to open the boxes. The first two contain dirty dishes and empty tin cans "such as had once contained vegetables and meats, and for variety they presented quite an assortment." The third box, lead-lined like the piano-box, contains the embalmed body of a woman, legs severed the better to fit the body into the box. These grisly contents resemble the dead girl left at the police station. The wine barrel contains watered wine "reduced so that it would serve the purpose of drinking-water, while the presence of the wine rendered it palatable."

Nick comes to some conclusions regarding the character of the man behind this affair: "His cold calculation, clear foresight, and reckless daring were all alike astounding." He realizes also that "but for the enterprise of the proprietor of a dime museum in his eagerness for sensations, the two crimes might have remained forever undiscovered and their perpetrator unpunished."

The autopsy reveals death was caused by prussic acid. The piano box is filled with sand to give it weight and resealed, then left at Kearney's auction rooms in case "Jack" should call for it. The ruse is not successful. As Nick leaves police headquarters he is handed a note from "Jack" in which

the murderer confesses, but says he has no intention of calling for the box at Kearney's.

"I am not such an idiot," the note reads. "Practice, I have heard renders one perfect in any branch, and I have had so much practice at killing that I now make no mistakes."

This most recent murder, he boasts, is his ninth. The note has a passage in which the chief of police (to whom it is addressed) is requested to show it to Nick Carter "who travels upon a reputation for phenomenal sagacity." He claims he owes Nick "an old grudge" and is considering making him his tenth victim and follow him with the chief.

Nick laughs at the threat and walks toward "the aristocratic portion of the city" where he is nearly run down by a driverless landau carrying a terrified woman.

Chapter Five: "Beware of That Man." Nick quickly grasps the bridle of the runaway horse, throws himself onto his back, and brings the carriage to a stop. He then drives the carriage to the young woman's destination.

An old gentleman, "past sixty and very feeble," accompanied by a lady and a servant, come out to thank Nick for his action. The man collapses from the excitement and subsequently dies. He is carried into the house where his wife, "who was much younger than her husband," nearly collapses. The man had been ill and now "the shock of Bertha's accident has killed him."

Nick sends a servant for the family physician who is a certain "Doctor Quartz." Bertha Mortimer, the young lady Nick has rescued, faints when she learns the name of the doctor who has been sent for. (Considering the years of trouble ahead for Nick, this is something of an omen.)

"There lies my only friend, my father, and he is dead, dead," cries Bertha, "and this man for whom you have sent was his worst enemy and mine."

Dr. Quartz arrives, pronounces Mr. Mortimer dead. Nick explains the circumstances surrounding his death. "Dr. Quartz listened attentively and politely, but with the suggestion of a sarcastic smile playing about the corners of his mouth all the time that Nick was speaking." Nick has introduced himself as "John Nicholas," since he has been working in disguise (as a man between 40 and 50 years of age) since arriving in San Francisco.

Nick senses that Bertha Mortimer dislikes Quartz, even if she hadn't just stated the fact. He himself feels there is "a mixture of the snake and the tiger about him. His motions [suggest] the twining grace and dexterity of a serpent, while his voice, though deep and eminently masculine, was soft and purring."

Quartz tells Bertha and her mother to go to their rooms, but asks Nick to stay for a moment. Nick makes a mental note of the youthful appearance of Mrs. Mortimer and is not surprised to learn she is Bertha's stepmother and not her real mother. He also makes note of the attitude toward Quartz of the servants—one of fear and dislike. He tries to leave, but is detained by Quartz who wishes to ask him some questions when he returns. Quartz then leaves the room.

When Nick has been left alone for the moment, Bertha comes to warn him of Dr. Quartz, "the greatest scoundrel that ever lived." It appears that Quartz has had some sort of evil influence over the Mortimer household for the past two years.

Chapter Six: "The Trump Card." Nick attempts to learn more from Bertha about her fear of Dr. Quartz. She hesitates at first, then tells Nick that Quartz is "an expert in the infliction of mental tortures." She outlines his history with the family:

- a) her mother died one month after Dr. Quartz became the family physician
- b) her brother died one year after that
- c) six months later her father (Jacob Mortimer) re-married
- d) sometime prior to (c) Mortimer became an invalid
- e) Quartz continues to suggest that Bertha's mind is unbalanced "by so much sorrow" in order to drive her to a mad-house unless she marries him.

From her knowledge of Quartz's moods and reactions, and her observation of him on this occasion, she thinks the Doctor has remembered Nick from some previous encounter and for some reason hates him. "Either your face or your name when you uttered it brought the matter to his mind. I know him so well that I know you are in danger. I would rather hear a hyena growl than see Dr. Quartz smile."

Nick gives her his card as "John Nicholas. Palace Hotel" and asks her to call on him if she needs help. She leaves and Quartz returns. The two exchange a few words and then Quartz offers Nick a cigar.

"They were exactly alike, and yet for one moment he examined them attentively before passing one to Nick.

"Are you a smoker?" he asked.

"An inveterate one."

"Then try one of my cigars."

"Thanks, but I do not care to smoke now. I shall take a car at the next corner."

"Ah, yes; well, do me the favor to smoke it at your leisure. These cigars are of an especial brand which I have manufactured for my particular use. You will notice a peculiar flavor to this when you light it, but that it will give you infinite pleasure I am positive."

As Nick boards his car "he [feels] something of the sensation that is experienced when one has been looking through a glass partition at a coiled and venomous serpent."

Nick meets the chief of police at the Palace Hotel and tells him he will be assuming a new disguise the next day. They move to the smoking room where the chief offers Nick a cigar which the detective accepts. He asks the chief if he knows anything of Dr. Quartz. The chief says he is a prominent physician, but that he doesn't seem to be generally loved by his patients. Of Jacob Mortimer the chief knows of his failing health and re-marriage and that Mortimer's daughter opposed the marriage.

Before the marriage, Mortimer had transferred his millions to his daughter "by deed of gift, reserving only the use of it to himself for life." The second Mrs. Mortimer was so disturbed at this that Mortimer asked Bertha to transfer \$100,000 to him which he then left to his wife in his will.

Nick then tells the chief of Mortimer's death and asks him to describe Dr. Quartz "just as you would a man who is wanted," for he now suspects the doctor of "playing a deep game for the Mortimer millions, and [fears] that he holds all the winning cards."

The chief obliges and describes Quartz from that point of view:

"Medium height, say five feet six or seven, broad and fat, though not portly; small hands, very white; small feet; smooth face; equiline nose; coalblack hair; gray eyes; lips rather thin; teeth very white and even; wears an habitual smile; has a habit of twitching the fingers of his right hand as though to grasp an imaginary cane; walks with a quick gliding motion; splendidly educated, and speaks in a low tone always. That is Dr. Quartz."

Nick then makes a prediction: that Bertha Mortimer will either go insane or marry Quartz or that he himself will "take a hand in the game and play the thirteenth trump himself."

Chapter Seven: "An Unseen Foe." Nick goes to his hotel room, has a light supper brought to him, and settles down to reading the morning papers. He takes out Dr. Quartz's gift cigar and lights it. He muses over the "preposterous idea" that he has that Quartz and the mysterious "Jack" of the piano box case should both fit the same description. He begins to grow sleepy . . . wonders if it is something he has eaten, or something he has . . . In a flash he sees it all! . . . a poisoned cigar!

As he sinks to the floor he scribbles a message to the chief identifying Quartz and Jack . . . he fights to stay awake . . . he signs the letter, stuffs it into an envelope. This done he sticks a pin into his arm to wake himself up and "[follows] that heroic action by leaping up and down several times like a madman." He gains enough strength to seal and address the letter, then stumbles out of the room in an attempt to reach the hotel office. He drops the letter in the hall, stumbles back into the room to "turn out the gas" (the drug is obviously affecting his reasoning). In a final burst of accidental maneuvering he knocks the door shut so it latches, turns out the chandelier burners and collapses.

"And by way of a travesty of fate, downstairs in the midst of a group of friends, the chief sat smoking and chatting, with no idea of the horror that had swept over his friend" and eventually turns to go home.

Chapter Eight: "The Foe Discovered." A chambermaid finds Nick's letter on the floor of the hallways and takes it to the hotel clerk who sends it to the chief of police by messenger. The clerk (a suspicious type) goes to the room near the spot where the letter was found and knocks on the door. He tries the door, finds it unlocked and opens it. On finding Nick's body on the floor he sends the porter for a doctor and locks the door before going to find the manager.

On the main floor, the clerk meets the porter returning with a doctor—Dr. Quartz. (Quartz may have been lurking nearby expecting the call, since he had provided the drugged cigar.) Suicide (the Clerk's first thought) is suggested and Nick is placed on the bed. Quartz pronounces him dead of heart disease just as the chief (who already has Nick's letter in his hand) steps into the room.

The chief has Nick's body taken to his home and "the papers that evening contained a notice of the death of John Nicholas, of New York."

Dr. Quartz stops at the coroner's office that afternoon to verify his verdict and learns that the body is being prepared to be sent East. The chief has had Nick's hotel room sealed off and after a short search finds the half-consumed cigar Nick had told him to look for in his note.

At 1 a.m. Bertha Mortimer calls on the chief to ask if "Mr. Nicholas" is really dead and to accuse Dr. Quartz of the murder. When she hears it was through smoking a drugged cigar that he was killed she exclaims that "Mr. Nicholas" is not dead, but in "a stupor so closely resembling death that physicians do not know the difference." She knows the antidote which she learned by eavesdropping on a conversation between Quartz and her step-mother. When she hears that Nick has already been saved she faints.

When she revives, Nick tells her the chief had called in several physicians one of whom was versed in poisons from India. This man recognized the symptoms and prescribed the correct antidote.

Chapter Nine: "He Never Gets Left." Bertha tells Nick she overheard

Quartz and her step-mother plotting to gain her property. From them she learned also of the attempt to kill him. Quartz has known all along who Nick really is, even through his many disguises. One of the reasons she has been able to stay alive in that household is by refusing to drink anything she hasn't procured from the outside herself. Until his sudden death, she had kept her father alive by keeping Quartz's prescription medicine from him whenever possible.

Nick asks her if the two ever mentioned a piano box. She says it was the source of much amusement for them when it was mentioned once. Four names also came into the conversation: Jeremy Stone, Oscar Burns, and Minnie and Sadie Burns. Nick correctly reasons that Minnie Burns must have been "M. B." and that Sadie was the second corpse. At that, the door-bell rings: enter Chick, disguised as a tramp. He has not taken time to telegraph he is coming. He feels his help would be needed and here he is, with a report.

The piano-box was made by a man named Jack Quigley, who fits the description of Dr. Quartz. Minnie and Sadie Burns—twins—are on the missing persons list of the New York police. Their brother, Oscar (a friend of Quigley's) instituted the search for them. It is Chick's suspicion that Oscar Burns knows more than he is telling, although it was Oscar who first suggested Quigley might have had a hand in the disappearance of his sisters.

"Big fortune left to Oscar," reports Chick, laconically, "obliged to pay sisters big annuity; sisters extravagant and fast. Oscar wanted to get rid of them; plotted with Quigley; Quigley did it for boodle."

Chick has interviewed Quigley's landlady who showed him parts of a cut-up piano. In young Burns' rooms there were more "choice cuts of piano."

Quigley had married Minnie Burns. Nick grasps the rest of the story. Q must have told the girl some "wild story of a romantic nature" to get her to go along on the piano-box trip with him. He killed her sister, Sadie, embalmed her and took her along in the smaller box. After arriving in San Francisco, he killed Minnie, for which he was well-paid by Oscar.

"Oscar does not know his real character," says Nick, "and would never look for him as a prominent physician here. He is the greatest villain I ever knew."

Chick, knowing there was no piano in the box, suspected it must have contained something else. He found the freight car it had been shipped in and traced the car to San Francisco.

His report completed, Chick gets rid of his tramp disguise and is introduced to Bertha Mortimer.

At daybreak, Nick, Chick, and the chief (all in disguise) call on Quartz, claiming that Nick has just suffered "a cataleptic fit." Nick is carried in to Quartz's office and placed on a cot. Quartz bends over him to examine him, recognizes Nick and reaches for his pocket. "But Chick was upon him before he could draw a weapon."

It takes the three of them to wrestle Quartz to the ground and three pairs of handcuffs to secure him. He is soon convicted of his crimes along with Oscar Burns and Bertha's step-mother (Laura Mortimer) as accessories. Jeremy Stone stands ready to make a fortune exhibiting the piano-box.

It is Quartz who has almost the last word as he swears vengeance:

"If I live to escape from here, friend Carter, I will do you the honor of killing you in a most scientific manner."

Later the detectives wait for the train to return them to New York. Chick slips away for an hour and on his return Nick comments that his assistant "nearly got left." Chick replies that he "didn't get left. I never do."

Knowing how taken Chick had seemed with Bertha Mortimer, Nick senses his assistant does not refer to the train.

It is here that the story ends although there are additional passages added in its later appearance in the book, *The Piano-Box Mystery*, to set the stage for an escape by Quartz and to bridge the text into the next episode. This first of the long series of encounters between Nick and Dr. Quartz was reprinted twice in its original format, as well as appearing in the *New Magnet Library* mentioned above. It was a popular segment of the Nick Carter saga. (For a complete bibliographic history of the story, see the end of this review.)

There is evidence here of Frederic Dey's strengths and weaknesses as a writer. He was apparently writing so swiftly that explanatory sentences dealing with new characters or sensational incidents had to be inserted later as he thought of them. Dey knew where he was going, but his mind may have been so far ahead of his fingers (or his voice during the period when he claimed he was dictating to a secretary) that these slips were unavoidable. Thus we are sometimes left uncertain about the precise relationship between the Mortimers—father, daughter, and step-mother—until we have had a chance to see them in action for several pages. How does Nick know the gentleman whose daughter he has saved is named Jacob? Perhaps a servant told him or he saw some stationery in the Mortimer house. Dey also seems to forget to tell us at first that Nick is disguised as he steps off the train in San Francisco.

But these points only irritate the cynic. The true aficionado will have learned to read between the lines and make his own assumptions. To the boys who were Nick's first uncritical audience, these stylistic lapses were no doubt never even noticed. Today we may marvel at how much takes place in the space of sixteen double-columned pages!

Dey's strengths are perhaps in his inventiveness and his slightly tongue-in-cheek approach to the more incredible portions of his plot. There is a twinkle in his eye as he sets down the memorable scene of the poisoned cigar. (Lest anyone think this device died with Nick Carter's age, I would refer you to Raymond Chandler's novel of 1949, *The Little Sister*, in which Philip Marlowe falls asleep after smoking a drugged cigarette offered him by a villainous doctor.) And there is the vivid character of Dr. Jack Quartz, alias Quigley, himself—perhaps even a more vivid creation than Nick Carter whose real self is often layers deep in disguise.

Quartz may even be the earliest example of the recurring villain in detective fiction, prototype for a hundred Professor Moriarty's. (The earliest recurring menace is Jesse James in the *New York Detective Library* series of stories which co-featured Old King Brady, but the Missouri outlaw was of a different stamp than Dr. Quartz.)

Admittedly, the story has flaws. The motivation behind the use of such a bizarre mode of transport as a piano-box is left unclear, as well as the necessity of purchasing (and dismantling) a piano. Couldn't an empty box be found? How much time did Quartz spend in New York as Quigley? Bertha implies he was always hovering around her father. When could he have gone to New York?

If Nick's deductions seem a bit forced, even far-fetched, a second reading of the story should make them seem the only logical conclusions to be drawn. Even this early in his career Nick must have realized the subtle ways in which the most un-related events would prove to be related in the final analysis.

But there is a zest and spirit of adventure, of dark deeds made light, and wrongs made right, that carries the story and makes the suspension of dis-

belief both willing and automatic. What boy in 1891 could resist the temptation to run down to the store the next week to see if Dr. Quartz would make good his promise to return? There he would find in **Nick Carter Library #14** (The Thirteen's Oath of Vengeance; or, A Criminal Compact) those opening lines:

"It was night! Tempestuous night . . ." and go to read of that remarkable escape from prison by Dr. Quartz . . . but that (as they say) is another story . . .

Bibliographic History

(Frederic Van Rensselaer Dey) "3,000 Miles By Freight; or, The Mystery of a Piano Box." **Nick Carter Library #13**, Oct. 31, 1891; Reprinted in **The Piano Box Mystery; or, Shipped By Freight (Secret Service Series #59**, Sept. 1892; **Shield Series #8**, Nov. 15, 1894; **Magnet Library #17**, Dec. 22, 1897; **New Magnet Library #960**, Aug. 1917; Reprinted as separate story, **Nick Carter Library #221**, Oct. 26, 1895; **New Nick Carter Weekly #779**, Dec. 2, 1911. Text in NCW 779 omits final eleven lines of NCL 13.

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H. Irving Hancock: A Romanticized View of Sports and Boys

By Ken Donelson

Few writers of boys books have been so immediately popular as H. Irving Hancock whose four volume series, *THE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS* (all published in 1910 under the Henry Altemus, Philadelphia, imprint), took Dick Prescott and five friends through four years of sports and school fun and adventure at Gridley High School. Each volume covers one school year, usually beginning with a confrontation between Dick and a snob/sneak/bully. Each volume portrays Dick as good and noble and true, and each demonstrates that the snob/sneak/bully ultimately can never stand up to the truly manly man. After calling Dick a "mucker," each snob/sneak/bully is temporarily defeated, only to become a foe sneaking and whining deviously through several plots twists attempting to bring dishonor upon Dick and Dick's friends. All these efforts finally prove unsuccessful, Dick is vindicated, truth and honor and goodness prevail, and God's in his heaven and all's right with the world. To the acclaim of friends, classmates, townspeople, and readers, Dick is triumphant volume after volume, and because this series was so successful and led to several sequel series, Dick's triumphs continue series after series.

Predictable as these plots and characterizations and denouements may be, *THE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS* series suffers most from its unrealistic, highly romanticized picture of the world of high school sports. Hancock's attempts to foster attitudes towards baseball and football may be sincere, but his understanding of the way athletes look at competition and his reverential acceptance of the value of sports in making a man a truly manly man are often inadvertently funny and always out of touch with reality. Hancock clearly believes Dick Prescott and Dick's friends deserve admiration and emulation, but the unselfish and noble actions and feelings and philosophies of Dick and friends succeed only in boggling the minds of underwhelmed and unbelieving readers.

In *The High School Freshmen, or Dick and Co.'s First Year Pranks and Sports*, the Gridley School Board of Education threatens to stop football, because athletics seem antithetical to scholarship. Dick and Company determine to prove the School Board wrong.

Athletics, at this school, were not overdone, but were carried on with a fine insistence and a dogged determination. Up to date, however, despite the fine work of their boys, the citizens of the town had been somewhat grudging about affording money for training athletic teams. What the boys had won on the fields of sport they had accomplished more without public encouragement than with it. (p.20)

'My remarks this morning,' announced Dr. Thornton, on opening school on Monday, 'are not so much directed at the young ladies. But to the young gentlemen I will say that, when the football season opens, we usually notice a great falling off in the recitation marks. This year I hope will be an exception. It has always been part of my policy to encourage school athletics, but I do not mind telling you that some members of the Board of Education notice that school percentages fall off in October and November. This, I trust, will not be the case this year. If it is, I fear that the Board of Education may take some steps that will result in making athletics less of a feature among our young men.' (pp. 23-24)

Dick's parents, presumably like other good parents in Gridley, make clear

what they think of all this Board of Education twiddle-twaddle.

'Abolish football at the high school,' echoed Mrs. Prescott, indignantly. 'And I've been sharing your great wish, Dick, to make the team when you're old enough. They shan't do it, anyway, Dick, until you've had your chance on the eleven.' (pp. 40-41)

And if there's any doubt in the mind of any reader, Dick does take care of the Board of Education and their foolish cares about scholarship, and Dick does it all through a series of boyish but certainly non-mean spirited pranks and escapades.

In the second volume covering Dick and Company's sophomore year, *The High School Pitcher*, or *Dick and Co. on the Gridley Diamond*, the sports versus scholarship argument is sounded again. Dick addresses his five friends.

'But see here, fellows,' urged Dick Prescott, 'just try to keep one idea in mind, please. There's a good deal of objection, every year, that athletics are allowed to interfere with studies. Now, as soon as the end of recess is called to-day, let's every one of us go back with our minds closed to baseball. Let us all keep our minds right on our studies. Why can't we six help to prove that interest in athletics puts the scholarship mark up, not down?'

'We can,' nodded Dave Darrin. 'Good! I like that idea. We'll simply go ahead and put our scholarship away up over where it is at present!'

To this the other chums agreed heartily. (pp. 70-71)

And only a few pages later, Hancock sounds the value of sports for all men.

'School and college athletics, rightly indulged in, give the budding man health, strength, courage and discipline to take with him out into the battle of life.' (p. 73)

In *The High School Left End*, or *Dick and Co. Grilling on the Football Gridiron*, Gridley High School is once more faced with significant athletic problems, but this time not from adults. The problem stems from a group of snobbish sneaking bullying young men—Dick labels them "soreheads"—so intent on proving their own financial and family superiority that they forget that they are supposed to be Gridley men first and last. Once again, Dick and Company prove their own innate superiority by putting the team and the school first, in the process becoming team members and school heroes. But the team and the school do come before all else, as Dick is wont to tell his friends and followers.

'Gently, gently!' urged Dick. 'Think of the honor of your school before you tie your hands up with any of your own mean, small pride. Our whole idea must be that Gridley High School is to go on winning, as it has always done before. For myself, I had hoped to be on the eleven this year. Yet, if my staying off the list will put Gridley in the winning set I'm willing to give up my own ambitions. I'm going to put the honor of the school first, and myself somewhere along about fourteenth.'

'That's the only talk,' approved Dave promptly. 'Gridley must have the winning football team.' (p. 19)

Any reader who believes that Dick and Company, despite all this talk, will not play for the team and will not win honors for team and school does not understand the need for all sorts of plot and character convolutions just as he does not understand that every hero must both talk and act heroically.

The virtues of football specifically and sports generally are oddly defended by Hancock in a conversation between two viewers of a practice session in a chapter appropriately entitled "Does Football Teach Real Nerve? One of the onlookers doubts that football prepares for the struggles of life."

but the other man clearly has the true faith, the faith of Dick Prescott and H. Irving Hancock.

'I tell you, it takes nerve, and a lot of it, to play that game,' remarked one citizen admiringly.

'Nerve? Pooh!' retorted his companion. 'Just a hoodlum footrace, with some bumping, and then the whistle blows while a lot of boys are rolling over one another. The whistle always blows just at the point when there might be some use for nerve.'

The first speaker looked at his doubtful companion quizzically.

'Would it take any nerve for you,' he demanded, 'to jump in where you know there was every chance of your being killed?'

'Yes, I suppose so,' admitted the kicker.

'Well, every season a score or two of football players are killed, or crippled for life.'

'But they're not looking for it,' objected the kicker, 'or they wouldn't go in so swift and hard. Real nerve? I'd believe in that more if I ever heard of one of these nimble-jack racers taking a big chance with his life off the field, and where there was no crowd of wild galoots to look on and cheer!'

'Of course killing and maiming are not the real objects of the game,' pursued the first speaker. 'Coaches and other good friends of the game are always hoping to discover some forms of rules that will make football safer. Yet I can't help feeling that the present game, despite the occasional loss of life or injury to limb, puts enough of strong, fighting manhood into the players to make the game worth all it costs.' (pp. 123-124)

Near the end of this book, Dick Prescott rescues the sister of one of the young snob/sneak/bullies from a burning house, and in this heroic feat, damages his lungs. The football team doctor refuses to let Dick prepare for the final game of the season, and Phin Drayne, another villain, takes advantage of Dick's condition and refuses to play left end. **Physically wracked as he is**, Dick cannot let this attack on the team and the school go by unchallenged, and Dick appeals to the team physician. Against his better judgment, the doctor examines Dick and to no reader's surprise, Dick's lungs are so much improved that he easily passes the examination. The unbelievable lines Hancock writes to describe this scene indicate the importance of sports to Hancock.

Thump! thump! thump! went the Doctor's forefinger against the back of his other hand, as he explored all the regions of Dick's chest.

A dozen more tests followed.

'What do you think, Doctor?' asked Mr. Morton.

'Ha! The young man recovers with great rapidity. If he goes into a mild game he'll stand it all right. If it turns out to be a rough game—'

'Then I'll fare as badly as the rest, won't I, Doctor?' laughed Dick. 'Thank you for passing me, sir. I'll get into my togs at once.'

'But I haven't said that I passed you.'

Dick, however, feigned not to hear this. He was rushing to his locker, from which he began to haul the various parts of his rig.

'Is it a crime to let young Prescott go on the field?' asked Coach Morton anxiously.

'No,' replied Dr. Bentley hesitatingly. 'It might be a greater crime to keep him off the gridiron to-day. Men have been known to die of grief.' (pp. 228-229)

In the final volume of the series, *The High School Captain of the Team*, or *Dick and Co. Leading the Athletic Vanguard*, Dick Prescott, Coach Morton.

Dick's friends, and H. Irving Hancock make clear that a young man who has violated the code of sports is damned forever. Redemption may be possible in the eye of God, but it surely is not likely to come from the athlete. Phin Drayne, betrayer of school and team in the previous volume, determines to try out for football once more. Phin determines to be the starting quarterback for the team though he has no experience at that position. Phin is denied this chance, and Coach Morton announces the following lines with the spirit of Dick Prescott looking on approvingly.

'I would give the idea more thought if Prescott recommended it; but I doubt if he would,' answered MMr. Morton slowly. 'Personally, Drayne, I don't approve of putting you on strong this year. The quitter's reputation, Drayne, is one that can't ever be really lived down, you know. (p. 17)

To crown Phin's disgrace, he is apparently a good student, a quality Hancock apparently does not overvalue, despite the author's comments about grades in the first volume of the series. After Phin is turned down for the starting quarterback's job, he betrays friends and teammates and school by sending copies of the football signals to opposing teams. Finally, Phin is booted out of the school. Much later in the book when Phin is preparing to apply to West Point, Dick steps in to set things aright, and once more the villainous Phin Drayne is frustrated and put in his proper place. At this juncture, probably the low point in Drayne's life, Hancock writes a most caustic remark, "Young Drayne, like many another 'peculiar' fellow, was an unusually good student." (p. 187)

There are other series books no better than Hancock's *THE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS*. Certainly, some other books are equally unrealistic about the pranks and the mental processes of young men. But few authors outside the Stratemayer fiction factory portrayed young men and the world of sports quite as romantically and unrealistically as Hancock. At times contradictory but at all times an unrealistic believer in sports and school, Hancock succeeded chiefly in writing fables about young boys and sports, neither existing in the real world as Hancock portrayed them. More a writer of life and times that should have been but never were, Hancock's triumph is one of romanticism over reality.

DE WITT'S ROMANCES — List of Titles

1. The Serf; or, Love Levels All, by Tom Taylor, Esq. Undated.
2. New York after Dark; or, Gleams and Shadows of City Life.
3. L'Affricaine; or, The Maid of Madagascar.
4. Gay Life in New York; or, Fast Men and War Widows.
5. Rip Van Winkle; or, The Sleep of Twenty Years.
6. Bob Brierly; or, The Ticket-of-Leave Man.
- *7. The White Fawn; or, Fairies of Fire and Water. Founded upon the Celebrated Drama from the French called "La Biche au Bois!" From the Fairy Extravaganza "The White Fawn," now playing at Niblo's in New York. 1868.
8. La Belle Helene.

*The above title was evidently later substituted with "Blacked-Eye Beauty" as later lists show this title.

WANTED

Wild West Weekly Magazines 1929 to 1938

R. Ritenour, Box 2, Edinburg, Va. 22824

Letters

Dear Mr. LeBlanc—

The issues on Stratemeyer I have found particularly interesting since I have been doing some work myself on the Rover Boys books.

Also, I found Arthur Carter's list of movies with dime novel characters to be quite valuable. One note on the Frank and Jesse James films: if the list of actors is intended to indicate who played Frank and Jesse, then the listing under The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid needs to be amended. In that film, John Pearce played Frank, Robert Duval played Jesse. Cliff Robertson played Cole Younger. I am sure Mr. Carter is aware of this, but his listing may confuse others who are not aware.

Sincerely, Jim Deutsch

Dear Mr. LeBlanc,

Do you or any of the other members of the DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP know of dime novels pertaining to Hot Springs, Geysers or Mineral Springs? I'm sure that there are at least a few of them that had their locations at such places. I am compiling a book on Hot Springs, and very much would like to include as an illustration an old dime novel cover. A colored cover, of course, would be ideal. Some place I remember once seeing a Tip Top Weekly cover (I believe) depicting the Geyser in Yellowstone, but of course when one needs it, it's impossible to locate something.

I miss not receiving the Roundup every month, but the new expanded issues more than make up for it. In one of the Hollywood trade papers, THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER, I noticed a small item about the forthcoming film on Deadwood Dick. In case you haven't heard about it I will stop and get one on my way to the post office and let you know about it.

Thank you for taking the time to try and help me in this project. Also, having just returned from 3½ months living and filming in Tibet, I wonder if anyone has any books on or about Tibetans or Tibet. Also books about Burma are needed.

Sincerely, Dan Adams

Dear Mr. LeBlanc:

Could you put a note into the Roundup that I have 17 hard cover old boy's books that I would like to sell or trade for Algiers or softcover Merriwells?

Thank you. Joseph Slepian, 7401 Ridge Blvd., Brooklyn, N. Y. 11209

Dear Ed:

Just finished reading: GHOST OF THE HARDY BOYS, by Leslie McFarlane, Publ. by Two Continents Pub. Group, 5 South Union St., Lawrence, Mass. 01943. Price \$8.95 plus 35c postage.

McFarlane can write an interesting witty book. He wrote the 1st 26 Hardy Boys, 3 Dave Fearless, one X-Bar-X Boys plus a few Dana Girls (Carolyn Keene).

McF mentions about the Stratemeyer Syndicate and mentions that he received from 100-150 bucks per book and that was it. Stratemeyer sure knew his business and no wonder he died a millionaire.

Dash 'em Dave Kanarr told me about the book so if you intend to mention it in a forthcoming DNR please give him the credit.

Cordially, George Holmes

RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES

CONCERNING DIME NOVELS, BOYS BOOKS, ETC.

BLESS MY BUTTON, IF IT ISN'T TOM SWIFT, by Arthur Prager. Article in *AMERICAN HERITAGE* for December 1976 (Vol. 28, No. 1). A good review of the Tom Swift books though I do not agree with some of the opinions expressed. The writer judges prejudiced comments in the series against today's standards forgetting the biases of the times during which they were written.

IN THE SHADOW OF THEIR GOAL POSTS. Article from *A CENTURY OF COLLEGE HUMOR*, edited by Dan Carlinsky, Random House, 1971. A comical view of Frank Merriwell, Dave Porter a la 1920.

AMAZING PREDICTIONS OF LITTLE-KNOWN AMERICAN WRITER by Malcolm Balfour. Article in *National Enquirer*, May 24, 1975 reviewing inventions of Frank Reade and comparing to present day science.

MERRIWELL'S WEST, by David Soibelman. Article in *Westways Magazine*. Illustrated with two Tip Top colored covers. Reviews Merriwell in his western adventures. Mr. Soibelman is an ardent Merriwell fan and subscribes to the Roundup.

HORATIO ALGER LECTURE TOPIC. News item in *Indiana Evening Gazette* for Nov. 12, 1976. Reviews lecture given by Ralph Gardner at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The subject was Horatio Alger, Jr. and His World.

THE PULPS: WHAT AMERICANS DID BEFORE TV, by Judy J. Newmark. Article in *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Nov. 7, 1976. Illustrated with some rare pulps. Reviews collection housed at Washington University's Olin Library.

HORATIO ALGER: YESTERYEAR'S HERO CREATOR, by Mark A. Stuart. Syndicated column *MARKING TIME*. Reviews Alger's works with little knowledge, "His 40-odd books". Does credit Alger with a reporter's instinct in bringing the plight of street boys to the attention of the public.

WANTED

Columbia Library #2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17

True Blue Nos. 1 thru 28

Medal Library Nos. 341, 353, 384, 525, 541, 607, 616

New Medal Nos. 556, 568, 579

Any Half Holiday, Starry Flag Weekly or Army and Navy Weekly with Frederick Garrison or Clark Fitch stories.

Please quote price and condition.

Jon Gentilman, 3658 Stevely Avenue, Long Beach, Calif. 90808

WANTED

Pulp magazines of all types wanted for my personal collection: Weird, Strange, Horror, Terror, Detective, Science Fiction, Mystery, Adventure, Super Heroes and many others.

Please indicate condition and price wanted.

Joe Goggin, 6202 Greeley Blvd., Springfield, Va.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

A. To the question regarding the Jack Straw series, Mr. Peter Walther offers the following: Some months ago I read of a subscriber who questioned the existence of the Jack Straw Series by Irving Crump. I'm positive I possessed one; remember giving it away about five years ago! Am certain the series was published. The title I had was Jack Straw, Lighthouse Builder. The publisher I believe was Brase & Hopkins with copyright date of 1916. The volume was grey in color with the figure of Jack Straw in white relief on the cover.

Q. Up The Ladder Club series by Edward A. Rand, publ. by Phillips & Hunt, 1885. I have the second volume entitled "A School In The Lighthouse." How many in the series? George Holmes.

Q. The Boy Captain by Capt. Nautilus, publ. by Werner 1899. What was the real name of the author? George Holmes.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

NEW MEMBERS

- 374 Dr. John C. Ehrmann, Jr., 4103B El Lago Court, Indianapolis, Ind. 46227
- 375 Robert E. Walters, 961 McClain Road, Columbus, Ohio 43212
- 376 David C. Andrews, Box 53, Andes, New York 13731 (former member)
- 377 Baldwin's Book Farm, 865 Lenape Road, West Chester, Pa. 19380
- 378 Hayes E. Wilcox, 6250 Springmyer, Cincinnati, Ohio 45211
- 379 Michael Solomon, Box 684, Cambridge, Mass. 02139
- 380 Jon Gentilman, 3658 Stevely Ave., Long Beach, Calif. 90808
- 381 Harvey King, 1705 Caton Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y. 11226
- 382 Peter C. Walther, 6 Hara Crescent, New Hartford, N. Y. 13413
- 383 M. C. Hill, Bunker Books, P. O. Box 1638, Spring Valley, Calif. 92077
- 384 James A. Kraynick, 2210 Bullis Road, Elma, New York 14059
- 385 Russell L. Mowry, 100 Girard Road, Cumberland Road, Cumberland, R. I. 02864
- 386 Richard H. Minter, Box 4324, Eden, North Carolina 27288
- 387 Saint Olaf College, Rolvaag Memorial Library, Northfield, Minn. 55057

NEW ADDRESSES

- 93 Edward G. Levy, 100 Sunrise Ave., Palm Beach, Fla. 33480
- 200 William H. Stickles, 4307 Granada St., Alexandria, Va. 22309
- 17 Capt. Frank C. Acker, USN (ret.), 3111 Bel Air Drive, Apt. 11E, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109

WANTED

Dime Novels and pulps featuring Chinatown locales, Oriental characters and villains, etc. Issues of Secret Service utilizing this theme especially sought. Please indicate issue, condition and price.

Albert M. Stangler, 37 West 16th St., New York, N. Y. 10011

WANTED: Any and all Jeff Clayton fiction. Will buy or trade (from my pulp collection) Jeff Clayton dime novels by William Warm, published by the Arthur Westbrook Co., or Jeff Clayton short stories appearing in Boys Best Weekly. I am especially looking for Adventure Series No. 120, Jeff Clayton's Masked Foe. Any additional information about Jeff Clayton would be greatly appreciated.

Gary Hoppenstand, 2014 Mackenzie Dr., Columbus, Ohio 43220